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The importance of fungi for a more sustainable future on our planet

by Lene Lange

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Abstract

Fungal products are essential building block for change towards a more sustainable future for our planet. We need to be able to convert plant materials to provide renewable substitutes for the products we now get from fossil resources. In nature, fungi are specialized in breaking down plant materials by the means of a rich spectrum of plant cell wall degrading enzymes. In industry such fungal products can be brought in use for converting bio-waste and agricultural crop residues into bioenergy, biomaterials, biochemicals, biofertilizer etc. But we need to understand fungal biology and diversity better before we can use it fully and efficiently. Increased mycological research efforts are needed to unlock this potential. We have excellent tools in our hands as genomics and bioinformatics. Now time is right to use such tools to focus on biodiversity, biology and interactions. Frontier mycological research is what is needed also for fulfilling the needs of applied use of fungi and fungal products. It is a part of the social responsibility of the mycological sciences, to ensure that mycological research from all over the world contributes to forwarding more sustainable solutions built on fungi.